

Farm Home Business Centers



CORNELL MISCELLANEOUS BULLETIN 25

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INTRODUCTION

During the year 1947-48 a rural housing survey was conducted by the states in the Northeast Region to determine the status of housing and to find out the needs and desires of farm people. West Virginia participated in the survey. The findings of this study were published in a book, *Farm Housing in the Northeast*, by Glenn H. Beyer of Cornell University.

Among the needs listed was one for facilities to carry on business activities of the farm and home. This was mentioned by more than two-thirds of the families interviewed. West Virginia University volunteered to accept responsibility for research that might suggest ways to meet this need.

Information was gained through reading and through interviews with farm people. On the basis of suggestions made to Mrs. Maxine P. Wittebort, the interviewer, several types of experimental business centers were set up. These were checked by members of several farm groups attending meetings at Jackson's Mill. Many suggestions were given by these people and changes were made on the basis of their suggestions.

The rebuilt centers were tried out in the housing laboratory and in farm homes in Monongalia and Barbour counties. Those that proved most satisfactory in actual use have been photographed and are presented in this circular. It is hoped that some of them may fit the needs of New York State farm homes, or perhaps suggest ways in which a family might proceed to meet a particular situation.

This circular is a progress report on space, facilities, and equipment needed for carrying on business activities of the farm and home. The research is a part of the Northeast Regional Farm Housing project, being done cooperatively by the agricultural experiment stations of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and West Virginia, and the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture. The research is being done under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

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Planning Your Business Center

Are you a "putter-offer?" Do you find that when you start to write a letter the stationery is in one place, pen in another, ink and stamps in still another? By the time you have your materials organized to write, the urge has left you, and you put it off until another day. Maybe you would have written that letter to Aunt Mary weeks ago if your writing supplies had been in one place.

An adequate business center must provide: (1) a place for writing, (2) a place for keeping writing supplies and current records, and (3) a place for storing such items as records of income and expenses, tax returns, and other important papers.

Each family will differ in the amount of space and kind of equipment needed for carrying on business activities. The family engaged in large-scale farming may find it necessary to have a more elaborate place for business than the family that farms on a small-scale or on a part-time basis. A farm office may be essential for carrying on the business activities of one family, whereas another family may find that the kitchen table and a drawer in the kitchen cabinet or other standard furniture may be adequate for that purpose.

In this circular we have included descriptions and made suggestions for many different ways of providing for the business needs of families. Some centers could be satisfactorily set up in the living room, others would be suitable for the kitchen, bedroom, or utility room.

Business furniture may be divided into different types. They include: (1) homemade, (2) built-in, (3) remodeled from other pieces of furniture, (4) new furniture for the home, and (5) standard office furniture. It is hoped that from the many suggestions in this publication, you may find one that will suit your needs or could be adapted to your needs.

If you are planning to set up a business center in your home, ask yourself the following questions before starting:

Where could we find a place for it?

How much space will we have for it?

How much can we spend for it?

Who will use it? "Mother, Daddy, Mary, Billy?"

How much storage space should be provided for each person who will use it?

How much space will be needed to store such items as receipts, mortgages, canceled checks, letters, insurance papers, old bills, and other family business records?

What activities will the business center be used for? Is there enough space for doing them?

If a desk is to be secured, what type should it be? How many drawers should it have? Are the drawers the right size for the records to be stored in them?

Is there a need for more than one business center in the home?

Is there discarded furniture that could be remodeled for a business center?

Could furniture now in use be remodeled or rearranged to make it adaptable for such use?

The business centers shown on the following pages have been set up to give space for writing, writing supplies and current records, and storage of old records.

If you have worked out a business center that is satisfactory, why not mail your suggestions to the Department of Economics of the Household and Household Management, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

A PLACE FOR—



1
Writing



2
Storing Supplies and Current Records



3
Storing Important Records

HOMEMADE BUSINESS CENTERS

Thrifty people prefer desks that may be economically and easily made at home. Orange or lemon crates, boxes, wood cartons, dynamite boxes, apple boxes, or other waste materials can be made into furniture suitable for business centers. Discarded or old furniture also may be used for this purpose.

Desks may be made from two or more orange crates, plywood or other lumber for the top, and blocks of wood to make the orange crates high enough for comfort in working.

Suggestions for assembling such desks:

1. Orange crates, two or more.
2. Top of desk—plywood: board covered with linoleum, formica, or other plastic material. Plywood should be from one-half to three-fourths inches thick, depending on size of top.
3. Blocks of wood to support crates. Height of writing surface should be from 29 to 33 inches, depending on height of users.
4. Additional shelves from the ends and sections of orange crates.
5. Screws to attach the top and blocks of wood to the orange crates.
6. Chair—comfortable and steady. Kneehole space large enough to put desk chair in when desk is not in use.

Two-Orange-Crate Desk



MADE FROM two orange crates and a piece of plywood, 24 by 48 by $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Crates are supported by blocks of wood to bring height to 29½ inches. Enough space has been allowed between crates to permit a chair to slide between them when desk is not in use.

Four-Orange-Crate Desk



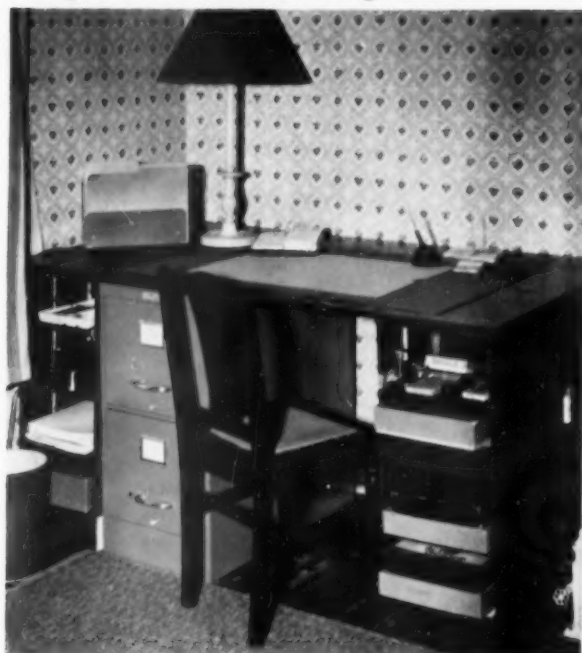
DESK with additional storage space can be made by using four orange crates. Two crates face toward the front and two face toward the side. More shelves have been added by using sections from another orange crate. This desk gives more work surface and storage space than the two-crate desk.

Four-Orange-Crate Desk for Two Persons



PLANNED FOR the use of two people, this desk may be made by using a plywood top, 42 by 40 inches, and placing an orange crate under each corner. Each crate is placed on a block of wood to increase height to desired writing level. This desk also could be used for a back-porch table for four.

Orange-Crate Desk with Filing Cabinet



A TWO-DRAWER steel filing cabinet is incorporated into this arrangement of four orange crates. Drawers of the filing cabinet are 9 by 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches and give additional filing space. Shelves have been added to provide more storage space. The plywood top is 30 by 60 by $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

Built-in Center with Writing Surface



IN THIS ROOM there was space between the chimney and a corner for a built-in business center. The plywood writing surface is 31 inches high and is attached to the shelf. Braces on either end support it. Doors cover the left side of the base section and the storage area over the writing surface.

BUILT-IN BUSINESS CENTERS

Perhaps your home is too small for another piece of furniture. Why not try a built-in center? Such business centers may be built in a space that is not in use. This could be in a corner, between a chimney and wall, or in an odd-shaped nook that may be waste space in any room of the house. A built-in center may be adequate for conducting all of your home business. It can be built at a low cost.

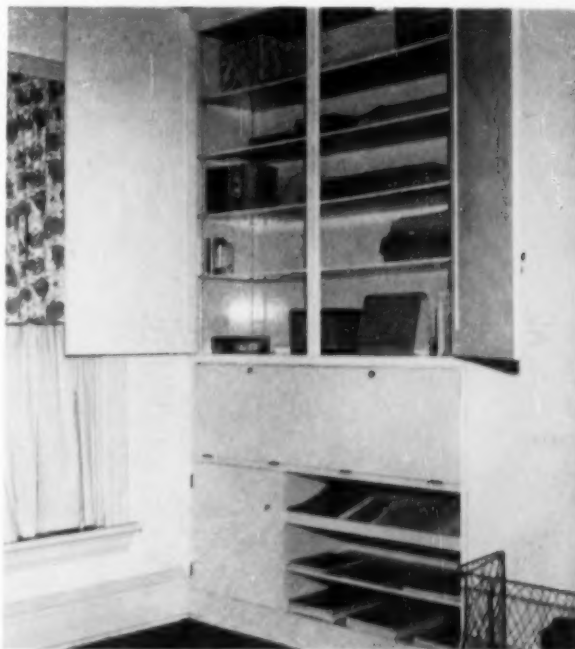
Shelves may be built at the top to provide storage space for past records, papers, books, or magazines. If desired, these shelves may be closed in by doors. A drop-leaf front would provide the writing surface. Shelves below or on either side of a kneehole space could be used for storage of children's toys or games.

If you have space for a more elaborate business center, one may be made by building a drop-leaf wall table. It can be attached at the desired writing height. The table is hinged so that it can be dropped to hang down on the wall when it is not in use.

Shelves also could be built into a wall, with an extension table for writing and sliding panels to cover space when work is finished.

A shallow, unused closet might be converted into a built-in center by providing shelves and extending one of them for writing surface. Use any "dead" space for your built-in business center.

Built-in Storage Area



ADJUSTABLE SHELVES give storage space for old records, books, games, seasonal decorations, and toys children have outgrown. A built-in center of this type uses very little floor space but offers an abundance of storage and work space. The writing surface can be closed when not in use.

REMODELED FURNITURE

Picture in your mind how that old wardrobe chest would look if it was made into a desk. Maybe the legs could be removed to decrease the height, or the top cut off and lowered. The door might be removed to give kneehole space. Almost with the snap of the fingers and with little or no money from your pocketbook, you have a business center.

Maybe that old wash stand or discarded table just needs a coat of paint. The condition of the furniture and the finish you want will determine the amount of work needed. Perhaps two or more pieces of furniture may be put together to make a desk.

Look at the old kitchen cabinet below. Does it have possibilities? Could the door on the base cabinet be removed and kneehole space cut out without hurting the desk-to-be? What possibilities might be hidden under the sliding doors? Many adaptations are possible, as shown in the photographs of the old kitchen cabinet.

These are just a few suggestions as to the ways you might remodel some old pieces of furniture. Look around! See what you have! Think of what you can do with it.

In the section showing business centers in West Virginia farm homes, you will find pictures showing how three families have remodeled furniture to make their business centers (see pages 10 and 11).

Desk Made from Cabinet Base



KITCHEN CABINET was separated into a top or wall section and a base section. The base was made into a desk by removing the door and cutting out the shelf. Plywood, 24 by 44 by 1/2 inches, was put on the top for a writing surface. The desk contains five drawers of varying sizes for storage.

Desk and Bookcase Made from Cabinet



TOP WAS MADE into a bookcase and hung on the wall beside the desk. The doors have been removed to give more open space. Perpendicular partitions have been added to lower shelf. This increases its usefulness for the worker. This wall book shelf also could be used on the floor.

Old Kitchen Cabinet



DISCARDED KITCHEN CABINET can be made into a useful business center. The wood was good, but the porcelain-enameled top had been taken off. Look carefully at the pictures and see how the cabinet was reworked and made into several different styles of serviceable business centers.

NEW HOME FURNITURE

If you have a more generous budget and would like to buy furnishings for your business center, many different types are available. New furniture for the home may be secured from furniture stores, mail order houses, and department stores. In this group, there is furniture built for business activities. The kneehole desk is the most common type.

When space is limited, you will want a business center that will serve more than one purpose. Many types of dual-purpose furniture are on the market today. An all-purpose table with drawers could serve as a dining table and also as a writing surface. The drawers could be used for the storage of writing supplies and record books.

A drop-leaf wall table could be used as a table for two in the kitchen or as a planning center for the homemaker.

A chest of drawers also could serve two purposes. It could be used for storage of clothes and business materials. A card table could be used for a writing surface.

Unfinished bookcases may be purchased to provide space for business supplies, books, and magazines. They are attractive for any room, yet inexpensive. A lap table, or other small table could be used for writing. Shop carefully! Your needs can be met!

Kneehole Desk



KNEEHOLE DESK is one of the most common pieces of furniture found on the market for the home business center. It is the most popular type of desk used in conducting farm and home business in West Virginia. The kneehole desk is available at most furniture stores and mail order houses.

All-purpose Table



MULTI-PURPOSE FURNITURE is a popular type that fits into our present-day housing needs. The all-purpose table has three drawers, 10 by 12 by 16 inches, on each side. The top is 16 by 30 inches when leaves are down, and extends to 64 inches when drop-leaves are raised.

All-purpose Table as Business Center



FLEXIBLE WRITING SPACE is found in this drop-leaf table. The writing surface shown is 40 by 30 inches. An inset tray has been added to the top drawer to hold small supplies such as pencils, paper clips, pens, etc. The middle drawer is shown as a filing drawer for small leaflets and bulletins.

Table-Chest Business Center



UNFINISHED TABLE and chest of drawers make a satisfactory business center for a bedroom or another room where storage is needed for items other than those pertaining to business matters. The small drawers hold small equipment, the bigger ones larger records and personal items.

Bookcases and Card Table



CARD TABLE that can be folded and put away serves as the writing surface of this business center. It is used in combination with the sectional bookcases that give needed storage space. A center of this type could be used in the living room, bedroom, or any other room.

Bookcases and Lap Table



BOOKCASES and lap table may be purchased unfinished. The lap table is a convenient height for typing. Since it is collapsible, it is easily stored. Bookcases provide storage for magazines, books, writing supplies, and other materials. Could be used when space is limited.

Drop-leaf Wall Table



DROP-LEAF WALL TABLE is suitable for a kitchen business center. It can be used for writing, eating, and other purposes. When not in use, the table can be dropped down on the wall. Above the table are shelves for storing supplies such as ink, paper, recipe file boxes, and cookbooks.

Drop-leaf Table



TABLE DROPS down against the wall when not in use. This table comes ready to be attached to a wall. It can be placed at any height. The top is made of formica, a plastic which comes in a variety of colors. This table may be purchased in different sizes at furniture or department stores.

Roll-top Desk



ROLL-TOP DESK, with its numerous pigeonholes, gives individual storage space for such items as letters, envelopes, pencils, and paper. The desk is 60 by 27 by 31½ inches. There are three drawers on the right and space for a typewriter on the left. The roll top may be pulled down.

REGULAR OFFICE FURNITURE

The farmer who operates a large business may wish to use standard office equipment for his business center or office. Office furniture comes in a variety of sizes and types and may be purchased from mail order houses or office supply stores.

The roll-top desk has been a favorite with many farm families for years. These desks are usually large and have many small drawers. A roll top covers the writing surface. Though few are being made now, they still may be found in some secondhand stores. A roll-top desk is shown on this page.

Small or large office desks made of wood or steel may be purchased for the farm business center. The large desks have drawers on each side, whereas the small ones have drawers on one side only.

Many offices will use filing cabinets. They come in many styles. The two-drawer file may be used to support one end of a homemade desk (see page 5). The four-drawer filing cabinet, for legal or standard paper, is probably the most popular. Specialty files are available with small drawers, shelves, or standard size drawers.

Office furniture also includes chairs, tables, lamps, and accessories. An office for a large farm may have a steel desk, four-drawer file cabinet, two steel chairs, a cot, and an easy chair.

All-steel Desk



PERHAPS YOUR business activities are so many that a special office should be set up to conduct them. This desk is all steel and has a 45 by 30-inch flat top. The lower drawer can hold 9 by 12-inch folders. A four-drawer standard filing cabinet is being used with the desk.

CENTERS IN FARM HOMES

Many farm families have developed business centers to meet their own needs. We were fortunate to get pictures of some of these centers. The Agricultural Extension Service has encouraged farm club women to undertake projects relating to business centers in connection with Better Living Projects. It was possible for Miss Charlotte J. Baughman, through the courtesy of the Extension Service, to interview some of these families and to get pictures of the business centers they were using.

It was found that only those people with large businesses and many records to keep had elaborate arrangements. Most of the business areas included only a writing surface and a place to keep supplies and records. In most cases old records were separated from the current ones. The business center was usually in the living room.

Farm families whose business was increasing felt the need of enlarging their business centers. Many had plans to make improvements in their business centers in the near future.

Some of the pictures in this section were taken in farm homes. These centers have been used by farm families and have been very satisfactory in meeting the needs of the individual families. Other centers shown also are designed to meet family needs.

Remodeled Old-fashioned Desk



AN OLD-FASHIONED DESK has been worked over and made into a business center. It has two side pockets, one center drawer, and a series of pigeonholes on the back. An apple crate, divided into sections, is placed on its side on the braces between the legs of the desk.

Remodeled Kitchen Cabinet



THIS KITCHEN CABINET was remodeled to serve as a business center. The top surface was put on new legs, thus eliminating the bottom storage section. The doors were taken off the top and the shelves were rearranged to provide space for books. The two small lower shelves contain supplies.

Open Bookcase and Desk



WINDOW SEAT was removed and the lumber from it was used to build these book shelves. A small desk is used between them for a writing surface. The shelves are as deep as the desk and provide sufficient storage and work space. A pull-out shelf on each bookcase provides writing surface.

Remodeled Porcelain Utility Table



REMODELED UTILITY TABLE gives adequate space for a planning or business center in the kitchen. The table has two drawers that are used to hold writing supplies. The shelves were built by the man of the house and attractively painted. The shelf arrangement is used for potted plants.

Writing Surface in Wall Cabinet



WRITING SURFACE is large enough to hold record book and have accessories. Light is furnished by fluorescent fixture covered with plywood to protect the eyes from glare, but was removed to show fixture in the picture. Pencil sharpener is on right hand wall.

Plywood Desk



WHEN SPACE is limited, a small desk made of plywood may be used. The desk has an enclosed shelf, five inches high, for storage of magazines and writing supplies. A lower shelf, supported by the crossbeams of the legs, gives additional space for books, recipe files, small magazines or newspapers.

Business Storage in Wall Cabinet



CABINET was designed to fit into a kitchen with other built-in cabinets. Though not shown with other cabinets in the room, it harmonizes with them. Three adjustable shelves above the writing surface, drawer, and shelf below drawer give space for two types of storage.

ACCESSORIES YOU WILL NEED

In addition to having a desk or writing surface and a place for storage, accessories are needed to make the business center complete and convenient. Accessories increase the ease with which the work is done. Some are large and costly, others are small and inexpensive. A few may be made cheaply and easily at home. Below are lists of accessories necessary for every business center:

account book	pen and ink
blotters	pencils
calendar	post cards
dictionary	small file
eraser	stamps
envelopes	stationery and
file folders	envelopes for
lamp or adequate	business and
light source near	personal letters
center	wastepaper basket

Accessories that may be included:

typewriter	rubber bands
address book	scissors
book ends	scotch tape
desk pen	spindle
glue or rubber	sponge for moistening
cement	envelopes

Small Accessories



SMALL INEXPENSIVE items add to the ease of working on business matters. Such items include, front row, stamp with pad, and file folder; second row, punch, pen, staff and well; and third row, book ends, calendar, and stapler. A plastic tray is in the desk drawer.

Partitions in Desk Drawers



CONVENIENT ARRANGEMENT of drawer space is the key to a well-organized desk. A removable drawer inset with partitions for pencils, thumbtacks, rubber bands, and other small items was made for the center drawer. In the side drawers, removable partitions have been added.

WATCH YOUR LIGHTING

Your work is made easier with good light. Adequate lighting must meet standards for quantity and quality. Fatigue and eyestrain may be reduced by having light free from glare, bright and dark spots.

The distance from the lamp or fixture will definitely influence the amount of usable light. Therefore, for work that requires constant use of the eyes such as record keeping, writing a letter, and reading, a good source of light, near the area where the work is done, is desirable.

When incandescent light is used on a desk or table, the lamp should have at least a 100-watt bulb and a diffusing bowl. The eyes should not be exposed to bare bulbs. Since dark colors absorb light and light colors reflect light, select a lamp shade with a white or light tint inside. Shades with a wide base and open top are usually good.

A business center needs a good source of light near the writing surface. General lighting also is needed in the room. Desk lighting may be furnished by inexpensive pin up lamps (see page 4). Many different styles of desk or table lamps are available on the market. The floor lamp may be used on some occasions (see page 8).

Whatever type of lamp or fixture you choose, make sure it provides good lighting in your business center.

Proper Lighting Is Needed



LIGHTING on the work surface is needed in addition to general lighting in the room. The certified lamp gives light on the desk. It has a shade, reflecting bowl, 60-100-150 watt three-way bulb. Lamp is tall enough to spread light over work area. Shade hides reflecting bowl and light bulb.

FILING: A NECESSITY

Systematic filing is an important part of farm and home business activities. By having a good filing system, important papers, letters, bulletins, and receipts can be kept so that you can find them easily and quickly. Have you ever spent two hours looking for that receipt when a company questioned your paying a bill? Perhaps you could have found it easily if you had had a place to file receipts.

Many families will find that they need to have a current file for materials they are now using and another file for materials that are not being used, but are being kept for reference in case there is a question about what the family did in a previous year. The current file should be in a convenient place and organized so that material could be found easily and quickly. The old or retired files that are used only occasionally may be labeled, then stored in a clean, dry place.

When setting up a filing system, thought should be given to the organization. It should be easy to maintain as well as easy to use. The file should be broken down into main divisions and subdivisions. The main divisions might be farm, home, and personal business. The number of subdivisions under each main division will depend on the material each person may want to file. Below is a list of suggestions for headings for a filing system.

HEADINGS FOR YOUR FARM AND HOME FILE*

Farm Business

- Account books
- Addresses
- Automobile records
- Bank deposit slips
- Bank statements
- Bills paid—receipts
- Bills to be paid
- Canceled checks—current year
- Income tax returns
- Insurance information
- Inventories
- Letters
- Tax forms
- Tractor records
- Truck records
- Valuable papers—lists

Home Business

- Account books
- Addresses
- Bills paid—receipts
- Bills to be paid
- Equipment—guarantees
- Equipment—instructions

- Farm Women's Club
- Food—amounts canned and stored
- Health records
- Household records—date of purchase, cost, etc.
- Letters—answered and unanswered
- Magazine subscriptions—dates, company
- Menus
- Organization information—P.T.A., Farm Bureau, etc.

Personal Business

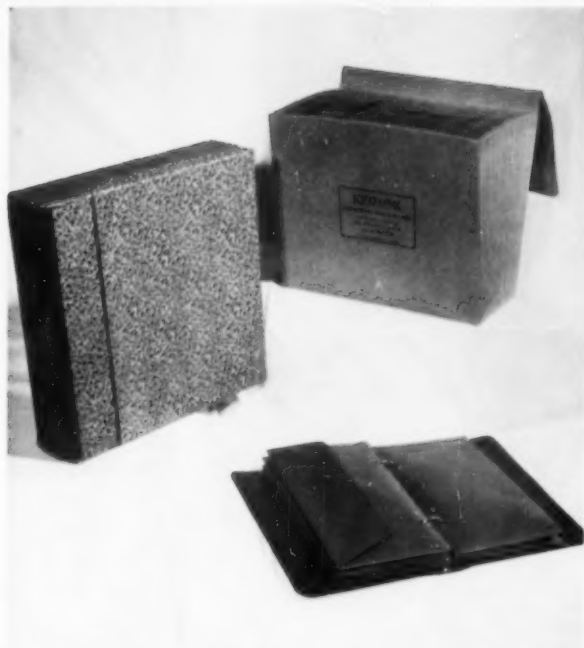
- Addresses—personal
- Birthday dates
- Christmas cards sent and received
- Christmas decorations
- Church work—Sunday School quarterlies—pledges, etc.
- Gift suggestions
- Hobbies
- Letters—Personal; answered and unanswered
- Reading book lists
- Special day suggestions
- Special interests

These are just ideas to use as headings for your filing system.

*Suggestions for headings were taken from — Wasmuth, Gladys, "A Business Center for Your Home," Good Living Series 18 Lesson No. 5, Agricultural Extension Service, West Virginia University.



Commercial Files



SOME ACCESSORIES for the home business center may be purchased. Those shown here include: top, accordion file, alphabetized for easy use; middle, book-like file box, top opens back; and bottom, notebook with envelopes for papers, receipts, and canceled checks.

Homemade Files



VARIOUS TYPES of files may be made at home in the size needed. Here are three examples of such files: left, large book file for business papers and file folders; middle, pasteboard box for a larger file; and right, book file in small size for bulletins. Each file was made from a paper carton.

Filing Old Records



FILING OLD RECORDS is most important for the farm and home business. The records from previous years have been collected and put together in boxes. The years have been written in large figures so that they will be easy to read from a distance.

THE ALPHABETIZED FILE (page 14) is made from an old cardboard box and covered with wallpaper. Folders are alphabetized under such headings as:

- Farm Business
- Home Business
- Personal Business

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